

[Forest Clark]

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RANGE-LORE

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Maverick, Texas

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Forest Clark was born in the state of Georgia in 1876 and came with his parents to Ft. Worth, Texas, when just an infant. When he was five years old the family moved to Runnels County and a few years later settled across the Colorado river from Bronte. He tells the following story:

"When we moved from Ft. Worth to Runnels County, I rode a horse most of the way and helped to drive our small herd of ninety-eight cattle. I was only five years old at that time.

"There was lots of wild stuff in the country then-everything but buffalo; they had been killed out. My grandfather and uncle used to come out this way in the sixties and shoot buffalo and sell their hides. They made good money and thought it great sport. When we came there was lots of deer, antelope, wild turkey, beaver, coyote, lobo wolves, wildcats and some Mexican lions. Rattlesnakes were plentiful, too. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas

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"We landed on the Wylie ranch that fall. But it came a blizzard in the month of February that held on for several days. It was the worst I've ever seen. It was dry, too, and grass was hard to find, so of course the cattle were in poor shape for the hard winter. The men

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rode day and night, trying to find shelter and a little something for the herds to eat. My father had only eighteen head of cattle left, when spring came.

“When we moved to Live Oak my father had bought more cattle, a few horses and 375 goats and started in the stock business in earnest, but after the drouth of '86 and '87 he sold his remaining cattle for a mere pittance and after that only tried to raise a few goats. He was a physician though, and did not depend altogether on ranching for a living. As a country doctor, he had a large territory to cover. He was called as far north as Ft. Chadbourne, west to Robert Lee, east to Maverick and as far south as Eden, and he always rode horseback.

“I remember encountering a few Indians, but they were friendly. I have heard my mother tell about Indian troubles. She said when she was small, one time when the men were all away from home, some Indians came to the house and poked their hands under the door and wiggled their fingers but the door was barred. They came three nights 3 in succession, but her mother didn't open the door and they finally gave up and left without harming anything.

“In 1877, my uncle Sam Weaver, and another man were moving a herd of cattle, some horses and furniture from California to Texas, with the intention of starting a ranch. When they were crossing New Mexico they were attacked by a band of Indians and two or three Mexicans. The Indians made off with everything they had except one wagon and team. But the folks finally reached Tom Green County and they felt pretty lucky, too, although they were broke.

“Besides having drouths to contend with, the early settlers sometimes had serious floods, the same as we do today. I remember one spring, old Oak Creek got on a big rise after heavy rains. I rode with my father to see it. It was a great sight to me. The water reached back to the hill, about one and one-half miles. Bob Castlebury lost his barn, fence and

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some hogs. Kickapoo Creek got up that spring, too. And the land where Bronte is now, was all under water. Crops were damaged and many cattle lost in that flood.

“On one of my rides, I happened up on a Mexican lion. He was lying quietly under a bush and didn't move until I threw a stick at him. I thought he might be wounded but he jumped up and I lit out. I didn't have a gun with me and it was time to be moving. 4 “I believe Clarence Jones was the best rider I knew. He worked for the Blocker outfit a long time. He could ride 'em bucking, backward, forward, upside down or any way. Bob Harwell was a good rider and cowman, too. If every cowhand wasn't pretty good then, well, he just didn't last long on a ranch.

“We had a great time during the big round-ups. Each outfit would have riders and a chuck wagon. All the nesters were there too, to help and get their stuff. The range boss would direct the man where to start, scattering the riders so as to cover thoroughly the designated area. Then they would drive all the stuff to a certain place and cut and brand. Each outfit took care of their cattle. Then they'd hold them until all the territory had been covered. The ones for marketing were driven away and the others turned loose.”

REFERENCES

Forest Clark, Bronte, Texas.